

SELAMAT PAGI FRIENDS!

My name is Benny, and I'm writing to you from my hometown of Bandung, a city of 2 million people on the island of Java. Java is one of about 13,000 islands that make up the nation of Indonesia. I heard you are interested in learning more about our country and the Java Trench, so I've offered to tell you a little bit about my homeland.

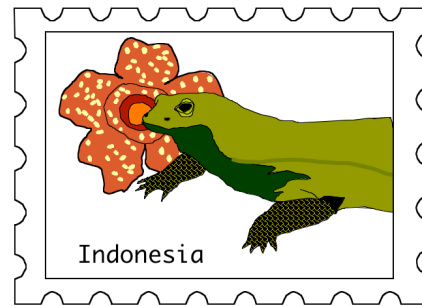


The Java Trench is located about 190 miles (305 km) off the southwestern coasts of the islands of Sumatra and Java.

<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=9043431>

Krakatau. Back in 1883, there was an island off the west coast of Java in the Sunda Strait called Krakatoa (it is called 'Krakatau' in our native language). On this island were three active volcanoes. Beginning in May of that year, small eruptions and a large earthquake occurred, leading people to believe that something great was going to happen. By the beginning of August, all three of the volcanoes were spitting out ash and steam. On August 26, the island exploded.

By the morning of August 27, most of the island was gone and rocks and lava continued to shoot into the sky. The entire mountain – all 790 meters (2,600 ft) of it – was gone. And to make matters worse, the eruptions had triggered tsunami waves that battered the coastal towns on the islands of Java and Sumatra. These waves reached heights of up to 40 meters (130 ft) and were powerful enough to fling ashore coral blocks that weighed up to 600 tons (that's 1.2 million pounds!). When all the waves had



Just imagine for a second that you will be coming here to visit. I would have so many trips set up for us to go on! The first trip would be to the local wildlife preserve, where you would acquaint yourself with the Komodo dragon, the world's largest lizard. Native to our country, the Komodo dragon can grow to over 3 meters in length! I bet you don't have lizards of that size back home! But the Komodo dragon is endangered and protected by the government. I volunteer at the wildlife preserve, so I get to interact with them all the time.

Our second destination would be Anak



Nestled between the large Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra is the Krakatau Volcano National Park.

[http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Newsroom/NewImages/images.php3?img\\_id=16320](http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Newsroom/NewImages/images.php3?img_id=16320)

run their course, more than 36,000 residents of these towns were killed! My great-great-great grandparents experienced these tidal waves but managed to survive. They wrote about it in a journal that has been passed down to me.

After the huge explosion of Krakatoa, only about one-fifth of the original island remained above water. A short distance away, a small new island formed. It was called Anak Krakatau (meaning “child of Krakatoa”), and it surfaced in 1959. Since then, it has been very active and has been growing in size and height with every small eruption. My uncle is a volcanologist, and he said that he would take me there to see the island up close! This will be my first time there, so I’m extremely excited. Many people say that Anak Krakatau will one day experience an explosion similar to that of Krakatoa. It’s all part of living in a country that boasts the most active volcanoes in the world – 76! A lot of people here are constantly on their toes because most of our eruptions have come in the past 100 years.

The third place I want to tell you about is off the shores of Java – the great Java Trench! Trenches are like deep underwater valleys that are often found running side-by-side with a chain of volcanic islands. Indonesia is a chain of volcanic islands between Australia and the main continent of Asia. These islands run alongside the Java Trench. The Java Trench is the deepest point of the Indian Ocean, at 7,450 m (24,442 ft) below sea level. It runs 2,575 km in an east-west direction. It is the second deepest point in the world, after the Mariana Trench located in the Pacific Ocean! Thanks to my father, who works at a government lab, I frequently tag along with his team of oceanographers as they go offshore to do their research on the Java Trench. They send underwater craft to take pictures, and I watch as they analyze some of the data that come in!

The last thing we’d do if you came to visit Indonesia is take a road trip to the island of Sumatra, which is a larger island located a little to the northwest and connected to Java by roads. Sumatra, just like the rest of Indonesia, is home to many rare and unusual plant species. On preserves you will see more Komodo dragons and also get a whiff of the Rafflesia – the world’s largest flower that gives off a really foul odor that smells like rotting meat! A lot of times, I like to meet up with some of my cousins who live in Padang and go scuba diving!



A komodo dragon.

<http://www.ch4.org.uk/images/clackfig8jpg1086865554.jpg>

Hopefully, you will have a great time learning about Indonesia, especially exploring the Java Trench, which many people call the “Shadow of Indonesia.” And just in case you ever do visit, don’t forget to pick up some handy Indonesian phrases. For starters, you should know “selamat tinggal,” which means “good bye”!

Hope that was helpful,  
Benny Makmur  
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